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# New Start, New Prime Minister

The Tower commission, with its honest and constructive report, Thursday gave President Reagan a new opportunity. He seized it yesterday by naming Howard Baker as White House chief of staff. These are good starts on a long and difficult road back to credibility for the President.

Former Senator Baker should be a wise and effective prime minister. That's exactly the role Mr. Reagan assigned his previous chiefs of staff. James Baker performed brilliantly and things worked well for the Administration. Donald Regan functioned poorly and so did the Administration, disastrously in the Iran-contra affair. As the Tower commission made plain, Mr. Reagan's "management style" depends on a first-class top aide.

As Senate majority leader for four years, the Tennessee Republican pushed the Administration's program through without offense to Democrats. He knows how to keep his party coloration while respecting the value of bipartisanship. Though he lacks executive experience, he has the political savvy to set a substantive agenda for Mr. Reagan and make it happen.

This is also an opportunity for Mr. Reagan and Mr. Baker to strengthen the White House team gen-

erally. The recent appointment of Frank Carlucci as national security adviser has already done so, but much more remains to be done. They might reconsider the nomination of Robert Gates to be Director of Central Intelligence and select someone of stature untainted by the Iran-contra fiasco.

On his handling of this disaster, during and after, Mr. Reagan merits little applause. One exception is the commissioners he chose to examine the record and make recommendations. There were doubts about former Senator John Tower, a prominent Republican, as head of the commission, but he acted admirably throughout. The fact that the President also named former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, a strong Democrat, and Brent Scowcroft, a retired general of the highest integrity, indicated there would be no whitewash. Mr. Reagan did the right thing in choosing men of this caliber and giving them access to information.

Then the commissioners did their job. They put partisanship behind them to seek the truth, as far as they could. Their report hit the Reagan mark, without destroying his Presidency. That report and the appointment of Howard Baker begin the process of transforming a crisis into a problem.